

William M. Evarts.

The following is an abstract of a sketch of the late William M. Evarts, written by Albert Shaw and published in the April number of the Review of Reviews.

The mother of William M. Evarts was the daughter of Roger Sherman. A sterling patriot was Roger Sherman, a Massachusetts handicraftsman in his young days, who became a man of education, an able lawyer, an honored citizen of New Haven, treasurer of Yale College, mayor of the town, assistant governor of the state for a long period, a member of the Continental Congress and one of the committee that drew up the Declaration of Independence, an active member of the Constitutional Convention, a prominent figure in Congress till the day of his death, and, more than all these things, a man of remarkable traits of personal character, in whom were blended the classical Roman virtues and the purest Christian faith. The daughter of Roger Sherman was qualified by inheritance and training to rear a remarkable son. The father of William M. Evarts was a distinguished graduate of Yale College who studied law, but subsequently left the bar to become an editor in Boston, and a power in the moral and religious world. The paper which Jeremiah Evarts for some time edited in Boston, the Panoplist, was merged in the Missionary Herald, which he thenceforth conducted as the organ of what was the foremost missionary body of this country, the famous American Board of Commissioners for foreign missions. For a long time Mr. Evarts served as one of the principal executive officers of the American board. His scholarship was ample, and his sympathies were broad. Several of the secretaries of the American board have been men of statesmanlike talents and of wide knowledge of affairs at home and abroad. Jeremiah Evarts was a great citizen of this type. He died in 1831 at the age of fifty, when his son William was thirteen years old.

Jeremiah Evarts had been precocious, and it is said of him that reading was his favorite amusement before he was three years old. His son William was predisposed toward books and study, and entered the Boston Latin School at the age of ten. He entered Yale College at fifteen, it having been his father's wish that he should be sent to his own college at New Haven rather than to Cambridge. This would naturally also have been his mother's wish, in view of the very great prominence of her family at New Haven, where she herself had grown up. Mr. Evarts graduated in the class of 1837. He was, of course, a good scholar, ranking well in his studies. He was not one of the three men who took highest honors, but he came next, and was one of the three "high oration" men. The other two were Morrison R. Waite, afterward Chief Justice of the United States, and Mr. Edwards Pierpont, who became United States Minister to England, and was eminent in other ways. It has some significance that the three highest honor

men of that class were afterward quite eclipsed by the three men who stood next below them. Evarts, Waite and Pierpont, instead of concentrating wholly upon class work, were gaining a broader foundation for life.

Thus Evarts while in college was the principal founder and editor of the Yale Literary Magazine, and gave systematic attention to acquiring the art of public speech and debate, and to writing of essays and the formation of a facile style. He had inherited the type of mind that in those days found its appropriate place at the bar and in public life. The son of Jeremiah Evarts and the grandson of Roger Sherman was so manifestly destined to study law and to take a high rank that he was not hampered by any of the disadvantages of uncertainty as to a career. He entered the Harvard Law School after his graduation at Yale, and left Harvard two years later when twenty-one years of age to take a place in the office of an eminent New York lawyer, Mr. Daniel Lord, a Yale alumnus whom Evarts had met at New Haven. Two years later he was admitted to the New York bar, and two years later still, in 1843, at the age of twenty-five, he was married to a daughter of Governor Wardner of Vermont. His own father, Jeremiah Evarts, had been born in Vermont, and circumstances had early attached him to the neighborhood of Windsor, on the Connecticut river. With his slight frame and his intense and arduous professional life, it is not unlikely that the maintaining of his beautiful home at Windsor as a summer residence had not a little to do with the conservation of his forces to a great age.

Mr. Evarts' advancement in public life was due in no sense to the practice of the arts of the politician. He was even less the politician, if possible, than the late President Harrison. Like this distinguished son of Indiana, Mr. Evarts made his way by sheer force of professional and intellectual superiority. It was evident almost from the beginning of his career that he was destined to become a great leader of the American bar. He had no occasion to use the smaller arts and devices of the legal profession, because he handled with such unerring skill the higher and greater means of success. He had the gift of incessant application, the habit of deep study, a grasp of first principles, the power of analysis, and a retentive memory that gave him ready use of a large fund of classical, literary and historical knowledge and allusion, as well as the lore of a technical and professional nature. All this equipment was made available by remarkable gifts of public speech and a flow of dry wit and quaint humor that never failed on any occasion. Mr. Evarts' utterances were elaborate and complex, but never either heavy or dull. If, like certain machinery, they were intricate, there was system rather than confusion in it all, and every word or qualifying phrase had its use and meaning. Thus, in Mr. Evarts' arguments and public addresses, quite as in those of Mr. Gladstone, there

was rare dignity and stateliness, and no lack of lucidity. Such a style, however, serves better its primary purpose—that of impressing the listening audience—than any subsequent purpose of print.

Without knowing anything about the facts, one could have reasoned infallibly to the conclusion that Evarts must have been a supporter and friend of William H. Seward. Mr. Seward's talents were of a kind that Mr. Evarts would naturally have appreciated. A great lawyer and scholar, a statesman of lofty ideals and bold imagination, the foremost figure in the republican party, and the leader of the anti-slavery forces in the United States Senate, Mr. Seward was worthy of the admiration and support of the republican lawyers of New York. In the convention at Chicago that nominated Abraham Lincoln, William M. Evarts led the New York delegation, worked faithfully for the nomination of Seward, and made the nominating speech. But the honorable duty fell to his lot of moving to make the nomination of Abraham Lincoln unanimous.

Probably, however, the very greatest personal service that William Maxwell Evarts rendered to the people of the United States was that which he performed as principal counsel for President Johnson in the great impeachment trial in 1868. Whatever policy Mr. Lincoln in his second term might have chosen to pursue in dealing with the south after the termination of the war, it is likely enough that he could have carried with him the public opinion of the country and the support of Congress. But his assassination resulted in elevating to the presidency an ill-qualified and stubborn man between whom the great republican majority in Congress there was an ever-widening breach. This reached its climax when Johnson summarily removed Mr. Stanton from the office of secretary of war. Congress had previously passed a tenure-of-office act, requiring the consent of the Senate to the dismissal of any such high official as a cabinet officer. The House of Representatives immediately moved upon impeachment, and, as provided by the Constitution, the Senate prepared to hear the charges under the presidency of Chief Justice Chase. Nearly all the members of the Senate were republican, and the sentiment in favor of sustaining the charges was overwhelming. There followed the greatest impeachment trial in all history.

Congress was impelled in its action against Johnson by sincere conviction, and its leaders were men of such unity and force of purpose as we have not seen in Congress at any time since then. A two-thirds vote of the Senate was required to convict. This outcome failed by a single vote. It is reasonable to say that to Mr. Evarts was due a result that all Republicans have since learned to regard as most wise and fortunate. Andrew Johnson's behavior was unbecoming and vexatious, but he was not guilty of "high crimes;" and to have removed him from office would have been a

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